Counselor Effects on Client Outcomes: Preliminary Findings

Persistent Effects of Treatment Studies (PETS)

Sponsored by:

Center for Substance Abuse Treatment

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The Cuyahoga County PETS Study

- Interim data from 1,250 people referred for SA treatment in Cleveland
- Have administrative treatment data at service unit level
- Comprehensive interviews at baseline, 6-, 12-, and (partial) 24-month follow-up (30- and 36-month interviews underway).
- Intent to treat sample--40% treated less than 2 weeks
- Demographics: 60% male; 71% Black, 24% White
- Primary drug: 36% alcohol, 33% crack, 16% heroin

Approach to Analysis

- Evaluation of treatment outcomes, looking for findings with practical applicability
- Subset of 1,050 clients in short- and long-term rehab, outpatient, intensive outpatient--No methadone
- Episode defined as a period of services with no interruption greater than 31 days
  - Could be multiple modalities and agencies
- Looked only at index treatment episode and 6-, 12-, 24-month follow-up interview results
- Outcome measures are average alcohol/cocaine use over preceding 6 months--8 point ordinal scales

Counselor and Other Administrative Data Independent Variables

- The counselor variable indicates if one counselor accounted for 75% of client's treatment time

- N of days in episode

- Intensity = Total treatment contact time / N of days in episode

- Also examined:
  - An alternate counselor variable at the 51% of time level
  - Total amount treatment contact time
  - Percent of total treatment by primary counselor
  - Counselor duration of employment (experience proxy)
  - N of clients in sample for whom the counselor was primary

Client Descriptor Independent Variables

- Average alcohol/cocaine use over 6 months preceding study entry--8 point ordinal scales
- Perceived self efficacy scale at baseline
- Single question on the value of listening to others
- Gender
- Also examined:
  - Education (highest grade completed)
  - Employment (various measures)
  - Prior treatment (substance abuse and mental health)
  - Age, age at first use, & years of use

Alcohol Outcomes at 6 Months

- Baseline level of use consistently associated with follow-up use level
- Better outcomes for those who:
  - Receive 75 % of their services from one counselor
  - Have longer episode duration
  - Receive higher intensity treatment
  - See value in listening to others
- Client gender not significant
- Average use dropped from 2-6 times to less than once per week

12 Month Alcohol Outcomes

❚ At 12 months, the pattern is similar but some effects are attenuated:

- Baseline alcohol use remains significant
- Better outcomes associated with receiving 75% of services from one counselor, higher treatment intensity, and longer episode duration
- Listening to Others variable is no longer significant at .05 level
- Client Gender still not significant

24 Month Alcohol Outcomes

❚ At 24 months, parameter estimates decline somewhat and the patterns shift:

- ❚ Baseline alcohol use remains significant
- ❚ Better outcomes still associated with higher treatment intensity and longer episode duration
- ❚ Listening to Others variable becomes significant again
- ❚ The counselor variable (receiving 75% of services from one counselor) is no longer significant
- ❚ Client Gender still not significant

Cocaine Outcomes at 6 Months

- Very similar finding to alcohol, with a few interesting differences at 6 months
  - Client gender is significantly related to outcome, with males having better outcomes than females
  - Perceived self efficacy is important, but valuing listening to other is not
- Counselor variable is significant at 6 months, but not at 12 & 24 months
- Cocaine use dropped from 2-6 times per week to once in six months

Conclusions

- Patterns of counselor service delivery appear to be significantly related to client outcomes. If this finding is borne out by additional analysis it could have immediate practical relevance to the field

- Administrative data can provide additional information useful to understanding the relationship between service delivery patterns and SA outcomes

- Additional analysis is needed to fully characterize the relationship between services and client outcomes. The PETS project will be undertaking this analysis over the next 2 years.